

THE ISSUE CLEARLY STATED.

By EUGENE V. DEBS.



HERE are those who sneeringly class Socialism among the "isms" that appear and disappear as passing fads, and pretend to dismiss it with an impatient wave of the hand. There is just enough in this great world movement to them to excite their ridicule and provoke their contempt. At least they would have us think so and if we take them at their word their ignorance does not rise to the level of our contempt, but entitles them to our pity.

To the workingman in particular it is important to know what Socialism is and what it means.

Let us endeavor to make it so clear to him that he will readily grasp it and the moment he does he becomes a Socialist.

It is our conviction that no workingman can clearly understand what Socialism means without becoming and remaining a Socialist. It is simply impossible for him to be anything else and the only reason that all workingmen are not Socialists is that they do not know what it means.

They have heard of Socialism—and they have heard of anarchy and of other things, all mixed together—and without going to any trouble about it they conclude that it is all the same thing and a good thing to let alone.

Why? Because the capitalist editor has said so; the politician has sworn to it and the preacher has said amen to it, and surely that ought to settle it.

But it doesn't. It settles but one thing and that is that the capitalist is opposed to Socialism and that the editor and politician and preacher are but the voices of the capitalist. There are some exceptions, but not enough to affect the rule.

Socialism is first of all a political movement of the working class, clearly defined and uncompromising, which aims at the overthrow of the prevailing capitalist system by securing control of the national government and by the exercise of the public powers, supplanting the existing capitalist class government with Socialist administration—that is to say, changing a republic in name into a republic in fact.

Socialism also means a coming phase of civilization, next in order to the present one, in which the collective people will own and operate the sources and means of wealth production, in which all will have equal right to work and all will cooperate together in producing wealth and all will enjoy all the fruit of their collective labor.

In the present system of society, called the capitalist system, since it is controlled by and supported in the interest of the capitalist class, we have two general classes of people; first, capitalists, and second, workers. The capitalists are few, the workers are many; the capitalists are called capitalists because they own the productive capital of the country, the lands, mines, quarries, oil and gas wells, mills, factories,

shops, stores, warehouses, refineries, tanneries, elevators, docks, wharves, railroads, street cars, steamships, smelters, blast furnaces, brick and stone yards, stock pens, packing houses, telegraph wires and poles, pipe lines, and all other sources, means and tools of production, distribution and exchange. The capitalist class who own and control these things also own and control, of course, the millions of jobs that are attached to and inseparable from them.

It goes without saying that the owner of the job is the master of the fellow who depends upon the job.

Now why does the workingman depend upon the capitalist for a job? Simply because the capitalist owns the tools with which work is done, and without these the workingman is as helpless as if he had no arms.

Before the tool became a machine, the worker who used it also owned it; if one was lost or destroyed he got another. The tool was small; it was for individual use and what the workingman produced with it was his own. He did not have to beg some one else to allow him to use his tools—he had his own.

But a century has passed since then, and in the order of progress that simple tool has become a mammoth machine.

The old hand tool was used by a single worker—and owned by him who used it.

The machine requires a thousand or ten thousand workers to operate it, but they do not own it, and what they produce with it does not go to them, but to the capitalist who does own it.

The workers who use the machine are the slaves of the capitalist who owns it.

They can only work by his permission.

The capitalist is a capitalist solely for profit—without profit he would not be in business an instant. That is his first and only consideration.

In the capitalist system profit is prior to and more important than the life or liberty of the workingman.

The capitalist's profit first, last and always. He owns the tools and only allows the worker to use them on condition that he can extract a satisfactory profit from his labor. If he cannot do this the tools are not allowed to be used—he locks them up and waits.

The capitalist does no work himself; that is, no useful or necessary work. He spends his time watching other parasites in the capitalist game of "dog eat dog," or in idleness or dissipation. The workers who use his tools give him all the wealth they produce and he allows them a sufficient wage to keep them in working order.

The wage is to the worker what oil is to the machine.

The machine cannot run without lubricant and the worker cannot work and reproduce himself without being fed, clothed and housed; this is his lubricant and the amount he requires to keep him in running order regulates his wage.

Karl Marx, in his "Wage, Labor and Capital," makes these points clear in his own terse and masterly style. We quote as follows:

"The free laborer sells himself, and that by fractions. From day to day he sells by auction, eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his life to the highest bidder—to the owner of the raw material, the instruments of work and the means of life; that is, to the employer. The laborer himself belongs neither to an owner nor to the soil; but eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his daily life belong to the man who buys them. The laborer leaves the employer to whom he has hired himself whenever he pleases; and the employer discharges him whenever he thinks fit; either as soon as he ceases to make a profit out of him or fails to get as high a profit as he requires. But the laborer whose only source of earning is the sale of his labor power cannot leave *the whole class of its purchasers*, that is the capitalist class, without renouncing his own existence. He does not belong to this or that particular employer, but he does belong to the *capitalist class*; and more than that: it is his business to find an employer; that is, among this capitalist class it is his business to discover *his own particular purchaser*."

Coming to the matter of wages and how they are determined, Marx continues:

"Wages are the price of a certain commodity, labor-power. Wages are thus determined by the same law which regulates the price of any other commodity.

"Thereupon the question arises, how is the price of a commodity determined?

"By what means is the price of a commodity determined?

"By means of competition between buyers and sellers and the relations between supply and demand—offer and desire.

"* * * * Now the same general laws which universally regulate the price of commodities, regulate, of course, *wages, the price of labor*.

"Wages will rise and fall in accordance with the proportion between demand and supply; that is, in accordance with the conditions of the competition between capitalists as buyers and laborers as sellers of labor. The fluctuations of wages correspond in general with the fluctuations in the price of commodities. *Within these fluctuations the price of labor is regulated by its cost of production; that is, by the duration of labor which is required in order to produce this commodity, labor-power.*

"Now what is the cost of production of labor power?

"It is the cost required for the production of a laborer for his maintenance as a laborer.

"* * * * The price of his labor is therefore determined by the price of the bare necessities of his existence."

This is the capitalist system in its effect upon the working class. They have no tools, but must work to live. They throng the labor market, especially when times are hard and work is scarce, and eagerly, anxiously look for some one willing to use their labor power and bid them in at the market price.

To speak of liberty in such a system is a mockery; to surrender is a crime.

The workers of the nation and the world must be aroused.

In the capitalist system "night has drawn her sable curtain down and pinned it with a star," and the great majority grope in darkness. The pin must be removed from the curtain, even though it be a star.

But the darkness, after all, is but imaginary. The sun is marching to meridian glory and the world is flooded with light.

Charlotte Perkins Stetson, the inspired evangel of the coming civilization, says:

"We close our eyes and call it night,
And grope and fall in seas of light,
Would we but understand!"

Not for a moment do we despair of the future. The greatest educational propaganda ever known is spreading over the earth.

The working class will both see and understand. They have the inherent power of self-development. They are but just beginning to come into consciousness of their power, and with the first glimmerings of this consciousness the capitalist system is doomed. It may hold on for a time, for even a long time, but its doom is sealed.

Ernest T. Ober

THE CHURCH IN BAD COMPANY.

That there is a partnership between modern Christianity and the capitalist system, dishonest and immoral as it is, is a fact easy of proof. William E. Curtis writes from

Japan to the newspapers that before the advent of Christianity there drunkenness was practically unknown. And he says, "That is something to think about. Is Christianity a failure in its influence over the personal habits of mankind? Why is it that the heathen behave so much better than those who have the light of the gospel? At one time early in the modernizing of Japan, her statesmen seriously contemplated making Christianity the state religion and organizing a state church like the established church in England. That was thirty years ago, and perhaps something might have come of the proposition had not the embassy of wise men who went around the world studying foreign affairs and customs advised against it on the ground that there was so much more crime, vice and poverty in London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, New York and other great Christian cities than in Tokyo and other heathen cities of Japan. And the contrast still grows in the most striking manner." Of course it is environment that largely shapes the man, and while it will not be contented that it is Christianity *per se* that produces the slums and the human demoralization in the capitalist cities, still Christianity is the religion of capitalism and is made to play an important part in the subjugation of the world in the interests of capitalism. Capitalism dominates it and demoralizes it and corrupts it with money. It uses it as a cloak; it uses it to justify all its crimes. There is no capitalistic war so terrible that the Chris-